

**Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Hall Conference Center
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

Minutes May 18, 2007

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, May 18, 2007, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. Donnelly-Cohen, Faricy, Lu, McCall, Morton, Porter, Wencil; and Messrs. Alton, Barrera, Commers, Cudahy, Goodlow, Gordon, Johnson, Kramer, Margulies, and Nelson.

Commissioners Absent: Messrs. *Bellus, *Rosemark, and *Spaulding.
*Excused

Also Present: Larry Soderholm, Planning Administrator; Anne Hunt, Mayor's Office; PED Director Cecile Bedor, Patricia James, Penny Simison, Yang Zhang, Luis Pereira, Andrew Jacobson, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes May 4, 2007

MOTION: *Commissioner Johnson moved approval of the minutes of May 4, 2007. Commissioner Faricy seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

II. Chair's Announcements

None

III. Planning Administrator's Announcements

Larry Soderholm reported on planning-related business at the City Council for last week and their agenda for next week.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING: Como (District 10) Plan Summary
Item from the Neighborhood and Current Planning Committee.
(Yang Zhang, 651/266-6659)

Yang Zhang gave the staff report. The plan addresses the following issues: 1) housing, 2) economic development, 3) community development, 4) transportation, 5) urban design and natural environment, and 6) recreation in the Como area. The plan was developed by a committee of residents in the District 10/Como area with the help of the district council and staff over a period of two years. Four neighborhood meetings were held to gather resident feedback and ideas. The District 10-Como Community Council voted in March to recommend approval of the plan summary.

Chair Alton read the rules of procedures for the public hearing and announced that notice of the public hearing was published in the Saint Paul Legal Ledger on May 3, 2007.

The following people spoke:

1. Nathan Volz, 1623 Dunlap Street North, Saint Paul, MN 55108, a representative of the Como District 10 Community. Mr. Volz outlined the planning process and reiterated the key points from the plan, including life-cycle housing, enhancing commercial areas, and the need to solve the traffic and parking problems that result from being a regional destination, i.e. people coming to Como Park and the state fairgrounds. He explained that the district council supports the proposal to build a police horse barn in Como Park to increase the police presence in the park and to reduce the transportation costs for hauling horses back and forth to Stillwater.
2. Brian Tucker, 250 East 6th Street, #719, Saint Paul, MN 55101, a representative of the Como District 10 Community. Mr. Tucker also urged the Planning Commission to adopt the plan summary.
3. Susan Jane Cheney, 1384 East Como Boulevard, Saint Paul, MN, 55117, a neighborhood resident. Ms. Cheney expressed her opposition to inclusion of the Saint Paul Mounted Patrol horse stables in the District 10 Como Community Council Land Use Plan. She stated that the site identified in the plan is located within Como Park. Besides violating the City Charter's no-net-loss-of-parkland provision, moving the stable to the park is inconsistent with the plan's statement in the Urban Design and Natural Environment section, which states, "The quality of the natural environment is critical to the District 10 community, public green space should be protected." The horse stable is not recreational in nature and does not qualify as an appropriate use of park space. Housing this facility in the park will result in elimination of a substantial portion of the only significant remaining woodland area in the park. Ms. Cheney said that she did not object to stabling the horses within the city limits and even somewhere within District 10 as long as this does not entail sacrificing parkland.

Ms. Cheney also read a letter from Deborah Robinson who could not attend the public hearing. She is another neighborhood resident. Ms. Robinson's letter was also in opposition to the police horse stables in Como Park. She wrote that she would never agree to give up precious parkland for this use.

4. Matt Schmitt, 1434 East Como Boulevard, Saint Paul, MN 55117, a neighborhood resident. Mr. Schmitt also expressed his strong opposition to relocating the Saint Paul Police horse stables in Como Park as written in the District 10 Land Use Plan. Public parks contain the most valuable land in the city – open space. What makes living in the Como neighborhood so great, in addition to the very low crime rate, is Como Park itself.

Mr. Schmitt said that he was not against relocating the horse stables closer to St. Paul. However, he did not think that the city should give up valuable park space for the stables. He requested that the Como Park location for the horse stables be stricken from District Land Use Plan.

Commissioner Gordon said that the exact wording in the plan says that the horse stables should be “in the area,” and not necessarily in Como Park itself.

Commissioner Goodlow stated that he is also a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and he strongly supports keeping the parks in the city as open and green. He said that he recognized the hardship of shipping horses in from Stillwater, as the Police currently do, but he strongly doubted that Como Park would be the best site for horse stables.

MOTION: *Commissioner Gordon moved to close public hearing but to accept written testimony until noon May 21, 2007, and refer the matter back to the Committee. Commissioner Cudahy seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

PUBLIC HEARING: Railroad Island Plan Summary

Item from the Neighborhood and Current Planning Committee.

(Yang Zhang, 651/266-6659)

Yang Zhang gave the staff report. The Railroad Island Plan summary was developed over the last year in an effort to update the full Railroad Island Plan, which was adopted by the City in 1994. Since then, the proposed zoning changes have been made, and some of the other recommendations have been implemented. The intent of the updated summary is to highlight the areas where further implementation is needed, and to ensure that adequate language is in place to maintain and improve the natural and built environments. The plan summary makes recommendations in five main areas--housing, economic and community development, infrastructure, environment, and safety and social issues. In addition, staff will bring two modifications to the plan summary to the Neighborhood and Current Planning Committee discussion regarding Payne Avenue improvements and housing and industrial redevelopment near Bush and Payne.

Chair Alton read the rules of procedures for the public hearing and announced that notice of the public hearing was published in the Saint Paul Legal Ledger on May 3, 2007.

The following spoke:

1. Leslie McMurray, 1014 Payne Avenue, Saint Paul, MN, 55130. Ms. McMurray spoke on behalf of the District 5 Payne Phalen Planning Council. They were involved throughout the update process and support the plan summary.
2. Linda Arnesen, 516 Payne Avenue, Saint Paul, MN, 55130, Chair of the Railroad Island Task Force. Ms. Arnesen said that the Task Force has spent a significant amount of time and worked hard on the plan summary, which provides an update to the original Railroad Island Plan. She encouraged the Planning Commission to adopt the summary as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Gary Bobb, 586 Payne Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55130, one of the Brownstone residents. Mr. Bobb said that Railroad Island has many assets and is a gem that needs a lot of polishing. He hopes that the plan will help guide future improvements.

4. Mary Brauer, 580 Payne Avenue, Saint Paul, MN, 55130, a member of the Railroad Island Task Force. Ms. Brauer acknowledged that the neighborhood is in transition, and will need a boost to revitalize its housing and commercial areas. She said that the plan summary is also a tool to engage the community, and to create a shared vision for the area.
5. Anne Briseno, 925 Payne Avenue, #201, Saint Paul, MN, 55130, a neighborhood resident. Ms. Briseno's organization, (ESNDC) East Side Neighborhood Development Corporation, works together with the Railroad Island Task Force, District 5 Planning Council, and Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services. ESNDC's primary role is to improve and develop commercial buildings in the area. They have redeveloped a few buildings in Railroad Island such as the Morelli's office building. ESNDC was also closely involved during the plan summary update process and support its adoption.

MOTION: *Commissioner Goodlow moved to close the public hearing but to accept written testimony until noon May 21, 2007, and refer the matter back to Committee. Commissioner Kramer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

V. Zoning Committee

NEW BUSINESS

#07-065-102 Brenda Braget – Conditional Use Permit for a carriage house dwelling. 942 Summit Avenue, between Chatsworth & Milton Streets. (Sarah Zorn, 651/266-6570)

MOTION: *Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the conditional use permit. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

#07-064-978 Lowertown Dogs – Determination that dog day care is similar to other B5 Central Business-Service District uses. 443 Wall Street, between 7th & 8th Street. (Luis Pereira, 651/266-6591)

MOTION: *Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the determination that dog day care is similar to other B5 Central Business-Service District uses. The motion carried on a vote of 17-1 (Kramer).*

Amendment to Zoning Code regarding outdoor sales of fireworks – Public hearing on amendment regarding outdoor sales of consumer fireworks as requested by City Council Resolution 06-910. (Patricia James, 651/266-6639)

MOTION: *Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the amendment to zoning code. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

VI. Comprehensive Planning Committee

National Great River Park Chapter of the Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework

Patrick Seeb, Executive Director of the Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation, introduced the plan and explained that it is a joint project of the Riverfront Corporation and the City's Parks and Recreation Department. They have been working together on it for nearly two years, during which time they have held citywide meetings, brought in consultants from other cities, and organized work sessions in each of the four reaches of the river in Saint Paul. They have enjoyed great support from Mayor Coleman, and also from the previous administration of Mayor Kelly. What is before the Planning Commission today is a set of guiding principles for future work along the whole river corridor. It is a chapter to be added to the *Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework*. It is proposed for approval as City policy, but not as a chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. As the new Comprehensive Plan is written, Mr. Seeb hopes that policies and development ideas from this plan will be incorporated, as was the case with the *Development Framework* a decade ago.

Mr. Seeb explained that the large concept behind this plan is to see all of the parkland in the river corridor as linked and part of a major regional system that has national significance, and to help us locally appreciate the river and better connect to it, both through physical design and educational programs.

Tim Griffin, Director of the Saint Paul Design Center, which is a component of the Riverfront Corporation, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the main points in the plan. The three themes of the plan are to make the river corridor more natural, more urban, and more connected. Each of these themes has goals and objectives. He illustrated how the themes can be implemented in each of the four reaches—gorge, valley, downtown, and floodplain. In each reach, he showed maps with recent and proposed projects to make the area more natural and more urban and to better connect neighborhoods to the river.

Cecil Bedor, Executive Director of the Department of Planning and Economic Development, stated that PED supports the three themes of the National Great River Park--more urban, more natural and more connected. She said a balance among these three themes will be important not only for sites at the river's edge (e.g. West Side Flats, Victoria Park and Ford), but also for sites in neighborhoods adjacent to the river corridor, such as the Schmidt Brewery. From a development standpoint, PED is committed to enhancing the natural environment as we improve the built environment. We recognize the high "place value" of the river, but we also recognize the ecological and environmental value of the entire river valley. We must be thoughtful as we build and redevelop so that both "place" and environmental values are retained and strengthened. From a planning standpoint, PED is committed to ensuring that the vision, goals and objectives in the National Great River Park Framework Chapter are incorporated into the appropriate Comprehensive Plan chapters, small area plans, precinct plans and TN3 master plans.

MOTION: *Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved the Comprehensive Planning Committee's recommendation to release the National Great River Park Chapter for public review and set a public hearing for June 29, 2007. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Update from the Land Use Comprehensive Plan Task Force
(Penny Simison, 651/266-6554)

Penny Simison gave an update on the progress of the Land Use Comprehensive Plan Task Force. After the introductory meeting, there were three sessions to clarify key land use issues--land for jobs, commerce and housing. Resource people have participated with task force members in lively discussions on these issues.

The next session will focus on "the livable city," later this month. The livable city discussion will focus on urban design and sustainability. The task force will also mark up the existing land use plan, which focuses on four strategies and is loosely organized by geography--downtown, the neighborhoods, growth corridors, and environmentally sensitive areas.

VII. Neighborhood and Current Planning Committee

None

VIII. Communications Commission

None

IX. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Faricy announced that the next Ford Site Task Force meeting will be Monday, May 21, 2007.

Commissioner Nelson announced the next meeting of the Como Avenue Small Area Plan Task Force will be on Thursday, May 24, 2007.

Commissioner Porter announced that the Central Corridor Task Force had its last meeting last night and approved the *Central Corridor Development Strategy* and its recommendations for interim zoning rules.

X. Old Business

None

XI. New Business

None

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Recorded and Prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

Approved _____
(Date)

Larry Soderholm, AICP
Planning Administrator

Marilyn Porter
Secretary of the Planning Commission

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